

CHURCHPRENEURSHIP IN THE NIGERIAN SOCIO-ECONOMIC SPACE WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE REDEEMED CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF GOD AND LIVING FAITH CHURCH WORLDWIDE

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The article seeks to examine churchpreneurship in the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and Living Faith Church Worldwide (LFCW). The presiding Pastors of the RCCG and LFCW, Enoch Adeboye and David Oyedepo are at the forefront of these churchpreneurship activities in Nigeria, which are aimed at resolving the socio-economic imbalance between the rich and poor. But are these churches' entrepreneurship activities in consonance with the biblical attitude towards materialism and what way(s) are their churchpreneurship affecting Christian doctrine and practice? Data gotten from publications in relation to the subject matter and the selected churches are subjected to biblio-theological evaluation within the framework of Max Weber's sociological theory of enterprise and they are also content analysed. Findings reveal that these churches have bipolar operations: secular business and corporate social responsibility models. While the prosperity teaching of Adeboye and Oyedepo provided the motive for entrepreneurship. A biblio-theological evaluation of churchpreneurship in RCCG and LFCW shows that they have the tendency to reduce Christianity to a faith for financial and material gains, and is at variance with the biblical teaching on materialism. Therefore, the paper recommends that Adeboye and Oyedepo should emphasize more on spiritual growth and eternity in their homiletical discourses.

Key Words: Churchpreneurship, Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Living Faith Church Worldwide (LFCW), Nigerian Socio-economic space, Entrepreneurship.

INTRODUCTION

The imbalance in the socio-economic order between the rich and the poor in Nigeria and the connection between religion and development, as evidenced by the twin activities of colonialism and missionisation, does not give room for the church to take a back seat in matters that concerns the socio-economic well-being of the people. Thus, churchpreneurship is becoming a common trend among churches in Nigeria, with the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and Living Faith Church Worldwide

(LFCW) taking prominent positions. Churchpreneurship has been defined as the various engagements of the church in business ventures with the aim of making profits (Shumba 2015). The literature reviewed in relation to this study have largely focused on the church's role and influence on the socio-economic and political development of Nigeria (Uchegbue 2016; Anozie 2013; Okai 2016); identified religious activities in relation to entrepreneurship in Nigeria (Bassey et al., 2014;

Iheanacho and Ugbaerumba 2016; Omonijo et al., 2016); and highlighted the contributions of the RCCG and LFCW to the socio-economic development of Nigeria and in the global context (Ukah 2005; Burgess 2009; Falaye 2017; Omotoye and Opoola 2012). In spite of these scholars' research on churchpreneurship in Nigeria's socio-economic space, little attention has been paid to the biblio-theological evaluation of the entrepreneurial activities of the RCCG and LFCW in Nigeria's socio-economic space. This forms the major thrust of this paper.

The postulating issues requiring investigation are: how have the RCCG and LFCW confronted and transformed the unequal socio-economic order in Nigeria? How do we place the entrepreneurship activities of these churches vis-a-vis the biblical attitude towards the accumulation of wealth and materialism and the ecclesial priorities of the church? And in what way(s) is churchpreneurship of the RCCG and LFCW affecting Christian doctrine and Christian practice? Therefore, the article examines how the RCCG and LFCW have developed and deployed entrepreneurship activities through their leaders, Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye and Bishop David Olaniyi Oyedepo, respectively, and their contributions in the Nigeria's socio-economic space. Also, the article evaluates their churchpreneurship endeavours as a faith-based organisation from a biblio-theological perspective.

This task is carried out within the framework of Max Weber's sociological theory of entrepreneurship. Weber, as cited by Ritzer (2009), stated that entrepreneurship is a function of religious beliefs and the impact of religion shapes the entrepreneurial culture. Weber's perspective is often called *interpretive sociology*.

Data for the research is gotten from published academic literatures, newspaper and magazine articles, and the selected churches' websites. The selection of the RCCG and LFCW is based on the fact that they occupy 2nd and 3rd positions respectively in the list of *Global Mega churches* as compiled by Bird (2017). Also, Forbes' updated list of world's richest pastors for 2017 has their leaders, Adeboye (networth: US\$130 million) and Oyedepo (networth: US\$150 million), in 6th and 5th positions respectively (Obichie 2017). Though, there are variations of this ranking online, yet, we may conclude that they both rank high among rich pastors in Nigeria based on personal and observed

disclosures. These factors show that the churches and their leaders have massive socio-economic influence in Nigeria.

THE REDEEMED CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF GOD (RCCG) AND CHURCHPRENEURSHIP IN NIGERIA

The focus of this section is on the activities of RCCG bordering on corporate social responsibility and secular business.

BRIEF HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION OF RCCG

The RCCG was founded in 1952 by late Rev. Josiah Olufemi Akindayomi (1909 – 1980). They started worship services at 9, Willoughby Street, Ebute-Metta, Lagos and later moved to the present location of the National Headquarters at 1-5 Redemption Way, Ebute-Metta, Lagos (formerly 1a, Cemetery Street). There are at least about 2000 parishes of RCCG in Nigeria. On the international scene, it is present in Europe, North America, Asia, Pacific countries, the Middle East and other African countries. Ukah (2005) explains the two types of parishes that exist in the RCCG: the *Classical* and the *Model*. The *Classical Parishes* emphasizes holiness, represents an apocalyptic or prophetic movement preparing and waiting for the coming of the end of the world, made up of mainly disempowered and uneducated members. But the *Model Parishes* emphasizes modernity, prosperity and exhibits images of wealth as an index of grace and salvation, conduct services accompanied by electronic musical instruments and conducted mainly in English without translation, are located at strategic and highbrow places where "worldly people" are found, have lowered the strict standards that governed the conduct of life in the *Classical Parishes*, and have mobile middle and high class people as members.

There are two annual routinized programmes of the RCCG that regularly bring together several thousands and sometimes millions of people to the *Redemption Camp* at Km. 46, Lagos-Ibadan Expressway: the *Annual Convention* that holds for one week in early August of every year and the *Holy Ghost Congress* that holds for one week in December. These programmes are replicated in Europe and North America for logistics reasons. There are monthly programmes: the *Holy Ghost*

Night, which is likewise held at different times in other locations around the world, where it is known as the *Festival of Life*; *Shiloh Hour*; and *Divine Encounter*. Also, it organises special *Holy Ghost Service* in higher institutions of learning. These events are transmitted live on television, radio and also streamed live on the internet. The church runs Bible Colleges and School of Disciples headquartered in Nigeria, with many campuses in the United Kingdom, Europe, Qatar and other continents.

Pastor Enoch Adejare Adeboye, who was a Lecturer of Mathematics at the University of Lagos, Nigeria and one of Pa Akundayomi's interpreters, became RCCG's General Overseer in 1981 amidst controversy, after the death of Pa Akundayomi (Bible-Davids 2009). According to Forbes, Adeboye's net worth is valued at between 39 to 65 million US dollars, owns 2 private jets, several houses and 3 top rated cars: Rolls Royce Phantom, Land Rover Discovery and Mercedes Benz Gelandewagen (Nwachukwu 2017).

According to Ukah (2014), the RCCG is considered the wealthiest most popular Pentecostal church in Nigeria. It is also the largest owner of private property in the country. It is now the fastest-growing church in Nigeria and in Africa. Rice (2009) calls the RCCG "one of Africa's most rigorously expansionary movements, a homegrown Pentecostal denomination that is considering becoming a global faith" (para.5). For Bird (2017) RCCG has become a transnational Pentecostal denomination and a mega church organisation, which as of March 2017 is present in 196 countries of the world. Presently, the defining character and action of the RCCG is missionary expansion as a result of its sense of eschatological urgency and its vision of having a member of RCCG in every family of all nations and to plant churches within five minutes walking distance in every city and town of developing countries and within five minutes driving distance in every city and town of developed cities.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

The RCCG takes up social welfare programmes within Africa and the diaspora context in line with its vision of reforming society. Thus, beyond focusing on the spiritual life of members, it also focuses on their social, material and psychological well-being. Its social welfare programmes falls within these areas: vocational training; orphanages; health

institutions; outreaches to drug addicts, street urchins, prostitutions and HIV/AIDS victims; scholarship programmes; free healthcare services, and huge amount of money is budgeted annually to these humanitarian activities worldwide.

According to Pastor Johnson Odesola, Special Adviser to the General Overseer on Administrative and Personnel, Adeboye has given a mandate to all the Provinces to ensure implementation of projects within their locality to complement government's efforts in providing basic amenities for the citizens (Latona 2013). Hence, there is a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) department in each Province of the RCCG. This unit is saddled with the role of appropriate response to the social, economic, and health concerns of where the Province is situated. Therefore, each province of the church, as stated by Ademigbuji and Adejo (2016), comprising of various Parishes, have been mandated to organise empowerment programmes for church members and people residing in their church communities. This is tailored towards the peculiar need and socio-economic challenges of the individual communities. The RCCG through its Parishes' health initiatives in their communities of residence, engage in spiritual healing, moral and health advocacy, medical support with the provision of drugs and treatments to infected people, and donates equipment and ambulances to government owned hospitals (Ojiego 2014; John 2017; Olofinlua 2013). Health institutions operated by the RCCG includes, but not limited to: Healing Stripes Hospital, Victoria Island, Lagos, Wellspring Rehabilitation Centre, Ojodu; Christ Against Drug Abuse Ministry, Ikeja (CRADAM); House of Joy, Surulere; New Life Drug Addicts Rehabilitation Centre, Lekki; Redeemed Christian Church of God Maternity Centre, Ibadan; RCCG Health Center, Ogun State, among others.

Furthermore, Michael (2014) informs us that the RCCG has provided water projects across the country especially in remote places far from the cities, where their missionaries are based. It established the Redeemed AIDS Programme Action Committee (RAPAC) in 1998 to deal with HIV/AIDS from the spiritual and medical angles. So, it offers sexual education and prevention training coupled with spiritual counseling to those living with or affected by HIV/AIDS and it is supported by *Family Health* and US AID.

The church empowers youths through its National Youth Empowerment Initiatives under the auspices of RCCG's National Youth Affairs department. Some

of the initiatives include SHIFT: unconventional ways such as dancing, singing, comedy, innovation, and empowerment that youths can relate with to promote their gifts and win them to Christ; R.I.S.E.: an initiative aimed at skill acquisition and empowerment with courses offered within a 2-week duration; National Youth Sports Festival, SHIFT Magazine, REACH: outreaches to remote villages in order to evangelise, organise CSR to public schools in the community, distribute clothes, food and other welfare materials, and donate equipment that the community urgently needs; and the *Messiah Marathon Praise*, which is a non-stop praise and worship service dedicated to thanking God for his faithfulness to Pastor E. A. Adeboye, with the number of hours equivalent to Adeboye's current age. In 2016, President Muhammadu Buhari commended Adeboye for the social and humanitarian interventions in providing health and educational services to complement the effort of government (Abisoye 2016). The RCCG's social orientation, as stated by Burgess (2009) has been influenced by its internal theology, its Pentecostal experience and its external social context.

BUSINESS VENTURES

The *Christ the Redeemer Ministries* (CRM) hosts the church's business ventures like bakery, restaurants, post office, supermarket, bookshop and media (audiotape, videotape and publishing) among other Para church ministries. The CRM is an independent but intricately formidable arm of the church registered separately with the Corporate Affairs Commission with Pastor Adeboye as its National Coordinator. The International Directory of the RCCG (2001) records that the CRM represents the personal vision and mission of Adeboye.

RCCG has made more of its wealth by commoditising the knowledge of Adeboye through the sale of his books and the CDs and DVDs of his sermons, and aggressively marketing them globally. To access their products online such as RCCG's hymn book, Sunday School Manual, Open Heaven Devotional, audio messages, and video messages one has to buy an activation pin before being able to download or pay certain amount in US dollars into an account under the CRM. There is also a paid membership site (www.store.rccg.org) where paid members can have access to the entire RCCG archive of books, videos and other assets. Though, there are available free downloads on the church's

website which are replaced monthly in order to conserve and optimize resources, yet, the user is encouraged to make a donation to support the RCCG IT Services Department and any ongoing church project.

It also operates guest houses and executive chalets opened to the general public, tourists, visitors and members alike, in the *Redemption Camp*, which Adogame (2010) terms "a Christian Disneyland" (p.50). These facilities are paid for by the users. The Haggai Community Bank owned by the RCCG developed an Estate called *Haggai Estates*, adjacent to the Congress Arena inside the *Redemption Camp*, comprising semi-detached duplexes, three and four bedroom apartments and bungalows. Ukah (2005) writes that RCCG controls more than 60% of the importation of blank audio and video tapes in Nigeria through one of its companies, Transerve Disc Technologies (formerly Transerve Nigeria Limited). It likewise controls the distribution and marketing of locally produced musical audio tapes and VCDs in Nigeria.

RCCG runs the Redeemer's University in Ede, Osun State and Christ the Redeemer's College with campuses in almost all of the church's Provinces. These educational institutions charge exorbitant fees that are out of the reach of the poor and less privileged. Obviously, this makes them a profit-making entity rather than a missionary educational institution. There is also the proposed Redeemer's College of Technology and Management (RECTEM), with which it intends to provide middle level technical and vocational training in order to create a pool of highly trained technicians and technologists.

It broadcasts its programmes on more than 28 local television channels as well as on satellite/terrestrial television through the Redemption Television Ministry (RTVM) and it also has a cable and satellite TV station called the *Dove Media*, which disseminates the presence, images and ideas of the church and its leaders to the global community (Ukah 2005). Then, the church sells live broadcasting rights of its crusades to global media groups and local TV Stations. Ukah (2005) states:

As a globalising movement, the RCCG ruptures the distinction between the sacred and the profane, this wordly and other wordly, pasturing and profiting; its unspoken slogan, exploit the earth but focus on heaven (p.111).

LIVING FAITH CHURCH WORLDWIDE (LFCW) AND CHURCHPRENEURSHIP IN NIGERIA

The focus of this section is on the activities bordering on the corporate social responsibility and secular businesses of LFCW.

BRIEF HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE LFCW

Falaye (2017) states that the LFCW (a.k.a. *Winners' Chapel International*) started as a full-fledged church in Kaduna, Nigeria in December 1983. LFCW has a 50,000 seater sanctuary (*Faith Tabernacle*) in Sango Ota, Ogun State, which serves as its International Headquarters built on a complex called *Canaanland*. The sanctuary is reported to be the largest auditorium in the world and one of the largest single congregation in the world by the *Guinness Book of Records*. In Nigeria, LFCW is divided into 8 regions (Diocese). Each Diocese, headed by a Bishop, has its headquarters in popular cities in Nigeria: Kaduna, Port Harcourt, Warri, Ibadan, Owerri, Abuja, Ilorin and Kano. It has over 5,000 branches both locally and internationally. It has a well-equipped publishing arm called *Dominion Publishing House*, which publishes all the books written by the founder, his wife and other ministry materials.

Bishop David Olaniyi Oyedepo is the Presiding Bishop of LFCW and the Senior Pastor of *Faith Tabernacle*. He was born on 27 September, 1954 into a mixed religious family; hails from Omu-Aran, Kwara State; married to Pastor (Mrs) Faith Oyedepo (formerly Florence Abiola Akano); and has four children: David Jr., Isaac, Love and Joyce. He was however raised by his grandmother, who instilled Christian values in him while living in Osogbo (Falaye 2017). He studied Architecture at the Kwara State Polytechnic, worked briefly with the Federal Housing Authority in Ilorin, Kwara State before he resigned and he entered into full time Christian ministry.

Adelegan (2013) further writes that Oyedepo is an acclaimed author and publisher, who has written over 70 Christian inspirational and motivational books apart from many periodicals, which are largely focused on getting people liberated from poverty and sickness. He also has a regular column in some Nigerian daily newspapers. His wife likewise has published books and a regular column in *Saturday Tribune*, which are geared towards

family related issues, most especially the stability of marriage. LFCW, in tandem with Oyedepo's mandate, regards its task as the liberation of the entire world from all oppressions of the enemy, both spiritual and physical, through the teachings and preaching of the word of faith.

The church's mandate to Africa is known as the *Africa Gospel Invasion Programme* (AGIP) and the foreign mandate beyond Africa is known as the "Mission to the World" (MTW), which is an arm of the *World Mission Agency* (WMA). The aim of AGIP and MTW is to propagate the gospel in other countries and to establish LFCW there. The church has educational institutions : the nursery and primary schools known as *Kingdom Heritage Model Schools*; the secondary schools known as *Faith Academy* while those within the universities are known as *Covenant University* and *Landmark University Secondary Schools*; *Covenant University*, Ota, Ogun State (established 2002); and *Landmark University*, Omu-Aran, Kwara State (established 2011).

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

LFCW carries out its CSR through engagement in activities and projects that positively impact people's lives physically and socio-economically. These include the construction of drainages where flooding was a major challenge; construction of boreholes in communities suffering acute water shortage; organising sports competition between the church youths and members of the community in order to foster peaceful co-existence within the community; rehabilitation of collapsed roads around Sango Ota, Ogun State, which hosts the international headquarters of LFCW; provision of transformer aiding electricity distribution; and donation of assorted relief materials during national disasters and even to some African countries like Liberia and Rwanda (Fwah 2017).

The church, through the *World Mission Agency* (WMA), provides employment opportunities wherever it exists and has total staff strength of over 2,000 employees. The employment made available by WMA, the Publishing House and its schools are solving the problem of unemployment in Nigeria in a considerable way. Unemployment is a social problem. Also, the WMA provides welfare and other health and humanitarian services to the needy in the society. And the books Oyedepo and his wife have written have helped to improve the lives of their

followers socially and economically.

Olanrewaju (2013) adds that *Covenant University* contributes to its host communities in the following ways: rendering services which range from environmental sanitation, beautification, construction of amusement parks, and to entrepreneurial skills acquisition. An annual amount of ₦100, 000,000 or US\$7,000,000 is administered in scholarships and bursary awards for education up to first degree level to church members through the David Oyedepo Scholarship Scheme and disbursed through the satellite fellowships where membership is validated (Adelegan 2013).

Oyedepo has a foundation (David Oyedepo Foundation), which is said to have donated, over ₦1 billion of personal funds to the provision of education in Africa. As stated on its website (www.davidoyedepo.org), it is a Christian non-profit organisation committed to investing in the development of Africa through education and the development of sustainable support systems for individuals, organisations and communities. This task is carried out through the provision of educational support to people from poor homes to access quality education; financial support to children marginalised by physical or mental disabilities; giving of grants to individuals carrying out research in eradication of diseases, campaign for safer health practices within communities and create a platform of support for those with life threatening health issues; developed and support programmes aimed at the development of well-rounded youth leaders; and support organisations and projects centered around promoting the gospel and message of Christ to the world.

BUSINESS VENTURES

Several business ventures operated by LFCW are located within the *Canaanland* complex including Dominion Publishing House, Hebron Bottled Water Processing Plant, a bakery, various restaurants and stores, Microfinance banks and several residential estates that provide accommodation for the church employees. Ogar (2017) reports that Oyedepo also floated an airline called *Dominion Air* in 2012. LFCW has massive investment in the educational sector in Nigeria as evidenced by the huge amount of fees being paid in their educational institutions from the primary level to the tertiary level. These school fees are exorbitant and naturally beyond the reach of commoners. Though, these schools provide

employment for many people that may otherwise would have been in the labour market as unemployed, yet, it is a huge revenue base for the church.

BIBLIO-THEOLOGICAL EVALUATION OF CHURCHPRENEURSHIP IN RCCG AND LFCW

RCCG and LFCW incorporate both a secular business and corporate social responsibility models. They engage in welfarist programmes that enhance their relevance in the Nigeria socio-economic space, while they also engage in ventures that are profit-oriented, which increase their financial income. Through their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, they have shown commitment to human resource development that promotes socio-economic self-sufficiency.

There is a high degree of business transaction and activities in the churches' mass programmes both at the *Redemption Camp* (RCCG) and *Canaanland* (LFCW). There are allotted stalls during such programmes that traders pay a fee to the church authorities for their usage. Moreover, the businesses owned by the churches serve a two-pronged purpose: profit generation and employment creation. Their *modus operandi* is based on a holistic understanding of mission, which includes social ministry and political actions. Also, the work ethic, religious pragmatism, success orientation and influential-value orientation of Pentecostalism has been an impacting factor in these churches' entrepreneurial influence in the Nigerian society. It is unarguable that RCCG (Adeboye) and LFCW (Oyedepo) have contributed immensely towards entrepreneurial development in Nigeria with an overarching influence on Nigeria socio-economic space. But this does not stop us from evaluating their activities in this respect.

A biblio-theological evaluation involves examining the biblical perspective on any issue within the context of the unity of the Bible, the mutual interaction of the literary, historical and theological dimensions of the biblical texts, and the wide variety of challenges with which modernity presents the church in the contemporary milieu (Bartholomew 2005; Rosner 2000). Two issues fall under this biblio-theological evaluation: the attitude towards wealth and the ecclesial priority of the church. Economic matters are prominent in the teachings of the Bible and historically, in the social ethics of the Christian church.

Wealth is neither evil nor ungodly, but elevating material wealth to a greater priority than the emphasis on godliness and spirituality exposes the Christian to certain temptation and traps. The crux of the instruction in the Old Testament is that God's people must not put their ultimate trust in wealth, their wealth is the Lord's, and it must be used to God's glory (Deuteronomy 8:18; Psalm 52:7). While in the New Testament, Jesus reminds us that money or material possession is God's creature and not to take God's role as the ruler of our lives (Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:21); the possession of wealth can easily tempt us to a devotion for the things of this world rather than God (Matthew 19:23-24; Mark 10:17-25); and that riches can render God's word unfruitful in our lives (Matthew 13:22).

Paul's assertion in 1 Timothy 6:9-10 (cf. Philippians 4:12) aligns with Jesus' instruction on attitude towards wealth and materialism Matthew 6:24-33: "You cannot serve God and Mammon" (vs. 24 NKJV). The English *mammon* is from the Greek word *mammonas*. Similar root words exist in Hebrew, Latin, Aramaic, Chaldean and Syriac. They all translate to "money, wealth, riches, and material possessions", especially that which turns one's attention away from God. In that sense, wealth is personified as a competing master to serving God. Ultimately, mammon is described as an idol of materialism, which many trusted as a foundation for their world and philosophy. It further refers to Jesus' condemnation of the idolatrous attitude of treating money or material possessions as a deity like God. It likewise speaks of what the heart is deeply devoted to as a slave submits to the master (Wellman 2015).

In the pursuit to meet people's socio-economic needs, God must not be pushed to the background. He must remain the Christian's top priority (Matthew 6:33). The creature cannot become more important than the Creator. Paul's advice in 1 Timothy 6:17 is most appropriate for the RCCG and LFCW that have become wealthy parastatals: "Tell those who are rich in the world not to be proud and not to trust in their money which will soon be gone. But their trust should be in the living God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment" (NLT). As Muether (1987) asserts, "The Bible is not ascetic; poverty is not inherently virtuous; nor is wealth sinful. But true wealth is spiritual, not material" (para.7).

On the other hand, the increasing message of prosperity, which is built around economic and financial themes, without the balance of focus on

heaven and eternal relevance make it very difficult to differentiate between the church and a business consulting organisation. The prosperity messages of Adeboye and Oyedepo have placed RCCG and LFCW between the boundaries of religious practices and economic activities. Also, the emphasis on increasing financial status and materialism could play down on the formation of Christian character. A "PLC" (Public Limited Company) attitude of the church could lead to the commercialization of the Christian message. Christian will supposedly be Christians for only financial and material gains. This breeds more religious or carnal Christians rather than spiritual Christians. Religiosity is not the same as spirituality.

Though, this study does not have empirical data to prove that churchpreneurship activities of RCCG and LFCW contribute to the declining spiritual and moral lifestyle of Christians in Nigeria, yet, the sermons focused on multiplication of profits and wealth has the tendency to shift people's focus from the spiritual and eternal to the earthly and temporal. It is unchristian to live with the objective of accumulating wealth. This is affirmed by Spurgeon (as cited in Carter 1988):

I believe that it is anti-Christian and unholy for any Christian to live with the object of accumulating wealth. You will say "Are we not to strive all we can to get all the money we can? You may do so. I cannot doubt but what, in so doing, you may do service to the cause of God. But what I said was that to live with object of accumulating wealth is anti-Christian (p.216).

Furthermore, as seen in the apostolic church, the ecclesial priority of the church is: teaching (Acts 2:42); fellowship (Acts 2:46); 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2); evangelism (Acts 10:11); missions (Acts 13:1ff); prayer (Acts 2:42); and contributions to the needs of other Christians (Acts 2:44-45; 4:34-37; Romans 12:13; Galatians 6:6; Philippians 4:5). By implication, in relation to the matter of discourse, the church is to take care of the poor and the less privilege within its ecclesial community and its geographical location (Matthew 25:41-48). The church community during the apostolic period pooled its resource together to ameliorate the socio-economic conditions of people in their milieu (Acts 4:32-34). But the church, as an organisation, never had any business geared towards profit-making.

The apostolic church balanced the doctrinal and social ministry aspects of Christian ministry.

There should be a balance between the “poverty model” of the ascetic/monastic movement of the medieval period (hinged upon Thomas Aquinas’ *nature-grace* dualism) and the “prosperity model” of the 20th century mirrored in the expansive economic growth and capitalistic tendencies of the industrial revolution and the information age. The “poverty model” elevated poverty as the ideal state for a Christian and institutionalised poverty as a necessity for spirituality or perfection. While the “prosperity model” considers financial and material prosperity as God’s will for every Christian. The balance between the “poverty model” and “prosperity model” is the “stewardship model”. The “stewardship model” recognises that all our financial and material resources belongs to God (Luke 12:48) and must be used for his glory with every sense of accountability.

It is an unarguable fact that the church must be involved in social ministry as depicted in the Lucan presentation of Jesus as Saviour. Yet, the church must keep its priorities right – “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:20-21 NKJV). Jesus’ social ministry was not bereft of calling people’s attention to the kingdom of God nor to matters of eternity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered on the basis of the biblio-theological evaluation of churchpreneurship in RCCG and LFCW:

- There is need for Pastor Enoch Adeboye and Bishop David Oyedepo to lay more emphasis on contentment, modesty, and being more heavenly conscious than earthly conscious in their homiletical discourse. This will curb the materialistic thirst of their adherents and give moderation to their quest for socio-economic emancipation.
- The presiding Pastors of RCCG and LFCW should preach a prosperity message that is biblical and theological. For prosperity teaching in its extreme applications, especially the form espoused by Bishop Oyedepo, does not draw a line of demarcation between spirituality and materialism. Messages overtly focused on prosperity, success, economic advancement,

reigning on earth and becoming God on earth, now gain prominent attention than those of salvation or spiritual growth in these churches.

- The different avenues and outreaches established by RCCG and LFCW to improve the socio-economic conditions of people should be financed through the financial and material resources pooled together from the voluntary contributions of Christians/Church members. This should be administered by selected members of the churches with proven integrity, and not the pastors of the churches.
- The educational and health institutions of the RCCG and LFCW should not be geared towards profit-making in the quest of operating according to global best practice. These institutions should be free or highly subsidised and not operated as a competing establishment to similar secular institutions. They should focus more on non-profit organisations rather than profit-oriented ventures. This was the practice of the church in the apostolic period, which made it focused on its ecclesial priorities.
- RCCG and LFCW should make their educational institutions to have a human face such that Pastors labouring in their churches and less financially endowed members of the churches will enjoy financial waivers and scholarships for their children. The criteria for such benefit should be made open and accessible. This will not make these educational institutions to look like business ventures established to maximise profits.

CONCLUSION

The RCCG and LFCW operate both a secular business and corporate social responsibility models. Their operational model is based on the holistic understanding of Christian mission; is at dissonance with the apostolic church’s balance of doctrinal and social aspects of Christian ministry; and has been influenced by the religious pragmatism, success oriented and influential-value orientation of Pentecostalism. Though, the RCCG (Adeboye) and LFCW (Oyedepo) have contributed immensely towards entrepreneurial development in Nigeria, yet, a biblio-theological evaluation of their entrepreneurship activities shows that their emphasis on increasing financial status and materialism could play down on the formation of

Christian character and may breed more non-committed Christians rather than spiritual Christians.

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